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REPORT
OF A
French Protestant Refugee,
IN BOSTON,
1687:

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

By E. T. FISHER.



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P R E F A C E .

THIS interesting Report, made in the shape of Answers to certain Questions, by a French Protestant Refugee who intended to settle in New England, was recently extracted from the Manuscript Collections of Antoine Court, preserved in the Library of Geneva, and published in the *Bulletin Historique et Littéraire* of the *Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, in February, 1867. It was translated for the *Liberal Christian*, a religious weekly Paper, published in the City of New York, appearing in November and December last, and has been carefully revised for the present Edition.

The *Bulletin* is now in the seventeenth Year of its Existence, and contains Matter of deep Interest to all Protestants, and much that is especially so to the Descendants of the French Protestant Refugees who came hither to escape Persecution.

Unluckily the second Letter, alluded to at the beginning of the second Part, and which contained the Author's Account of his Journey to Rhòde Island, is lost.

The following Notice, penned probably by Mons. Jules Bonnet, the accomplished Secretary of the Society, prefaces the *Relation*:

“Mons. Charles Weifs has devoted to the Refugees in America several interesting and instructive Chapters of his *History of the Protestant Refugees*. The following Memoir is an unpublished Page of this Episode in our Annals: The Name of the Author is unknown. A Phrase or two seem to indicate that he was a Native of Languedoc. Having set out for America two Years after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when already Numbers of Emigrants were turning in the same Direction, he was commissioned to collect on the Spot such Advices as might serve to guide his Comrades in the Faith, and facilitate their Establishment in the Land of Exile. His Narrative, divided into three Parts, one of which is unfortunately lost, is nevertheless of the liveliest Interest. It consists of the simple, honest

Impressions of an intelligent Observer who notes Everything in his Passage, omitting no useful Hint; the Route to be taken, the Price of Land, the relative Value of Money, Soil, Climate, the various Productions, Institutions already established, in short the Statistics, both material and moral, of a dawning Community.”





THE REPORT
OF A
French Protestant Refugee
IN BOSTON, 1687.

BY the Grace of God, I have been in these happy Regions, in perfect Health, since the seventeenth of the last Month, after a Passage of fifty-three Days, reckoning from the Downs, which are twenty Leagues from London, to Boston, and I may say there are few Vessels which make the Passage in so short a Time. Our Voyage was most fortunate, and I can say that, ex-

cepting three Days and three Nights when we had a great Storm, the entire Remainder was only agreeable and delicious Weather; for one and each brought Joy to our Bark. Wives, Daughters and Children came almost every Day to enjoy themselves on the Poop-deck. We had not the Pleasure of fishing on the Banks, because we did not come upon them; we passed them fifty Leagues to the South; our Course was almost always from East to West. We passed in the Latitude of the Fejalles [Azores], distant about sixty Leagues; these are Islands belonging to the Portuguese, and are four hundred Leagues from England. If there were no Fear of the Corfairs of Sales [Sallee], who often cruise about these Islands, Vessels would often come to Anchor in these Harbors, but these Pirates are the Cause of Vessels holding a Course far to the North. We

met a Number of Ships at Sea, some coming from the fishing Banks, others from the Islands of America; among others we met a Ship belonging in La Rochelle, which was coming from Martinique laden with Sugar, and which had previously made a Voyage to Guinea, whence it had brought one hundred and fifty Negroes, and two Capuchin Fathers who had been obliged to abandon their Post in Guinea, in View of the little Progress they there made. Almost the entire Crew and the Captain are Protestant. They came to our Vessel in their Launch, and promised us they would soon come to see us in Boston, in order to make Reparation for having unluckily succumbed [to the Love of Gain?]. They told us, moreover, that almost all the Protestant Inhabitants of the French Islands have gone; we have several here

in Boston, with their whole Families. By a Ship arrived from the Islands we have News that the greater Part of our poor Brethren who had been conveyed to St. Martin Island, have escaped to the Island of St. Eustatius, which belongs to the Dutch, and there is Hope that the Rest will soon be there. You will have learned, no doubt, that one of the three Ships that transported these poor Brethren, was lost, and from her only the Crew were saved. May God pardon these cruel Men, who are the Cause of these Sorrows, and convert them!

By another Ship arrived from New York, we have Letters notifying us that the Governor of [Quebec] had written a very strong Letter to the Governor of New York, the Grievance being that he had supplied Ammunition to the Iroquois who are at War with the French, saying that,

if he continued his Assistance to them, he should come and see them this Winter. The Governor of New York made him such Reply as he deserved, and at the same Time ordered a Levy of three to four thousand Men, all English (not being willing to draw off the French from their new Settlements where they have Need of great Affiduity in their Work), to go into Camp this Winter on the Frontier and observe the Movements of the French. The Governor of Virginia has Orders to hold himself ready with as many Men as he could raise, to come to his Assistance, in Case there should be Need. I believe the same Orders are here; Boston alone can furnish fifteen Thousand fighting Men, and if what is told me is reliable, she can furnish twenty Thousand. If any other News transpires, I shall not fail to communicate it. I reply now concerning the

Matters with which you were pleased to charge me on my Departure, at least, those about which I have already obtained Information.

FIRST. To come into this Country, you should embark at London, whence a Ship sails every alternate Month. The fittest Season to embark is the End of March; or, the End of August and Beginning of September are the true Seasons, more especially because it is neither too warm nor too cold, and you are then no longer in the Season of the Calms, which are frequent in Summer, and which cause Vessels to spend four Months passing thence. Beyond the Fact that the Heats often occasion Sickness on board, there are no Fatigues to undergo, when one has by him good Store of Refreshments and of all Kinds. It is well,

too, to have a Surgeon on the Ship on which you take Passage, as we had on ours. In Regard to the Dangers, Care must be taken to embark on a good Vessel, equipped with an ample Crew and with Cannon, and well provided with Victual, above all, that Bread and Water are not lacking. As for the Route, I have said sufficient above; there is no Danger except in nearing the Land, and on the Banks of Sand found on the Way. We took Soundings in two Places off Cape Sable, which is near Port-Royal or Acadia, where we found ninety Fathoms. At that Time we were only twenty Leagues from Land; we stood off, and came upon St. George's Bank, which is eighty Leagues from Boston, and there found one hundred Fathoms. From that Point, we took no more Soundings, for three Days after we sighted Cape Coot [Cod], which

is twenty Leagues from Boston towards the South, and on the Morrow we arrived at Boston, after having fallen in with a Number of very pretty Islands that lie in Front of Boston, most of them cultivated and inhabited by Peasants, which form a very fine View. Boston is situated at the Head of a Bay possibly three or four Leagues in Circumference, shut in by the Islands of which I have told you. Whatever may be the Weather, Vessels lie there in Safety. The Town is built on the Slope of a little Hill, and is as large as La Rochelle. The Town and the Land outside are not more than three Miles in Circuit, for it is almost an Island; it would only be necessary to cut through a Width of three hundred Paces, all Sand, which in less than twice twenty-four Hours would make Boston an Island washed on all Sides by the Sea. The

Town is almost wholly built of wooden Houses; but since there have been some ravages by Fire, building of Wood is no longer allowed, so that at this present writing very handsome Houses of Brick are going up. I ought to have told you, at the Beginning of this Article, that you pay in London for Passage here twenty Crowns [2*l.* 6*d.* each] and twenty-four if you prefer to pay in Boston, so that it is better to pay here than in London; you have one Crown over, since one hundred Pounds at London, are equal to one hundred and twenty-five here, so that the twenty Crowns one must pay at London are twenty-five Crowns here, by Reason of the twenty-five per cent., and twenty-four is all one has to pay here; this Increase in the Value of Money is a great Help to the poor Refugees, should they bring any.

SECOND. There is here no Religion other than the Presbyterian, the Anglican, Anabaptist, and our own. We have not any Papists, at least that are known to us.

THIRD. I will reply to the third Article concerning the R. [*touchant le R.*] when I shall be better informed.

FOURTH. Boston is situated in forty-two and a half Degrees North Latitude. At this writing it is Daylight at six O'clock in the Morning, and Night at six O'clock ; I mean the Break of Day, there being nearly an Hour of Twilight till the rising of the Sun.

FFTH. I make no Reply to your fifth Article, not having as yet been through the Country. In two Days I

am to set out for Noraganzet. On my Return, with God's Help, I will tell you of the Goodness and Fertility of the Soil and what grows thereon.

SIXTH. In Regard to acquiring Land, that which is taken up in the Noraganzet Country costs twenty Pounds sterling per hundred Acres Cash down, and twenty-five on Time, for three Years; but Payment is not made because it is not known whether that Country will remain in the Hands of the Proprietors, wrongly thus called, or belong to the King. Until this Matter be decided, no Payment will be made; in all Cases one cannot be obliged to pay more than the Price above mentioned, and in accordance with the Terms of Contract approved before the Town-mayors. We are even assured that if the King holds the Land, the Price

will be Nothing, or at least very little, the Crown contenting itself with a small feignorial Reservation, so that one can sell and let, the Property being one's own. The Nicmook Country is the private Property of the President, and Land there costs Nothing. I do not yet know the Quantity they give to each Family; some Persons have told me, from fifty to one hundred [Acres], according to Families.

SEVENTH and Eighth, to be answered.

NINTH. It rests with those who wish to take up Land to take it in one of the two Countries on the Seashore, or in the Interior. The Nicmook Country is in the Interior, and twenty Leagues from Boston, and an equal Distance from the Sea, so that, when they wish to send

or receive Anything from Boston, it must be carted. There are little Rivers and Ponds around this Settlement, fruitful in Fish, and Woods full of Game. M. Bondet is their Minister. The Inhabitants are as yet only fifty-two Persons. The Noraganzet Country is four Miles from the Sea, and consequently it has more Commerce with the Sea Islands, as Boston * * * [Two Words illegible], and the Island of Rodiflan, which is only ten Miles away. This Island, they tell me, is well-settled, and with a great Trade, which I know of my own Knowledge. There are at Noraganzet about one hundred Persons [of the Faith]; M. Carré is their Minister.

TENTH. You can bring with you hired Help in any Vocation whatever; there is an absolute Need of them

to till the Land. You may also own Negroes and Negresses; there is not a House in Boston, however small may be its Means, that has not one or two. There are those that have five or six, and all make a good Living. You employ Savages to work your Fields, in Consideration of one Shilling and a half a Day and Board, which is eighteen Pence; it being always understood that you must provide them with Beasts or Utenfils for Labor. It is better to have hired Men to till your Land. Negroes cost from twenty to forty Pistoles [*the Pistole was then worth about ten Francs*], according as they are skilful or robust; there is no Danger that they will leave you, nor hired Help likewise, for the Moment one is missing from the Town, you have only to notify the Savages, who, provided you promise them Something, and describe the Man to them, he

is right soon found. But it happens rarely that they quit you, for they would know not where to go, there being few trodden Roads, and those which are trodden lead to English Towns or Villages, which, on your writing, will immediately send back your Men. There are Ship-captains who might take them off; but that is open Larceny and would be rigorously punished. Houses of Brick and Frame can be built cheaply, as regards Materials, but the Labor of Workmen is very dear; a Man cannot be got to work for less than twenty-four Pence a Day and found.

ELEVENTH, Twelfth and Thirteenth.
To be answered.

FOURTEENTH. Pasturage abounds here. You can raise every Kind of Cattle, which thrive well. An Ox costs

from twelve to fifteen Crowns; a Cow, eight to ten; Horses, from ten to fifty Crowns, and in Plenty. There are even wild ones in the Woods, which are yours, if you can catch them. Foals are sometimes caught. Beef costs two Pence the Pound; Mutton, two Pence; Pork from two to three Pence, according to the Season; Flour fourteen Shillings the one hundred and twelve Pound, all bolted; Fish is very cheap, and Vegetables also; Cabbage, Turnips, Onions and Carrots abound here. Moreover, there are Quantities of Nuts, Chestnuts and Hazelnuts wild. These Nuts are small, but of wonderful Flavor. I have been told that there are other Sorts which we shall see in the Season. I am assured that the Woods are full of Strawberries in their Season. I have seen Quantities of wild Grapevine, and eaten Grapes of very good

Flavor, kept by one of my Friends. There is no Doubt that the Vine will do very well; there is some little planted in the Country, which has grown. There is Difficulty in getting the European Vine. If some little could be had, much more would be planted. Those who mean to come over thence, should strive to bring with them of the best.

FIFTEENTH, Sixteenth, Seventeenth, Eighteenth, to be answered.

NINETEENTH. The Rivers are full of Fish, and we have so great a Quantity of Sea and River Fish that no Account is made of them. There are here Craftsmen of every Kind, and particularly Carpenters for the building of Ships. The Day after my Arrival, I saw them put into the Water one of three

hundred Tons, and since, they have launched two others somewhat smaller. This Town carries on a great Trade with the Islands of America and with Spain. They carry to the Islands Flour, Salt Beef, Salt Pork, Cod, Staves, Salt Salmon, Salt Mackerel, Onions, and Oysters salted in Barrels, great Quantities of which are taken here; and for their Return they bring Sugar, Cotton Wool, Molasses, Indigo, Sago [*Manihot utilissima*] and Pieces of * * * *. In the Trade with Spain, they carry only dried Fish, which is to be had here at eight to twelve Shillings the Quintal, according to Quality; the Return Cargo is in Oils, Wine and Brandy, and other Merchandise which comes by Way of London, for Nothing can be imported here, coming from a foreign Port, unless it has first been to London and paid the half Duty, after

which it can be transported here, where for all Duty one-half per cent is paid for Importation, since Merchandise for Exportation pays Nothing at all.

TWENTIETH. To be answered.

TWENTY-FIRST. You must disabuse yourself of the Impression that Advantages are here offered to Refugees. It is true that in the Beginning some Subsistence was furnished them, but at Present there is a Need of some for those who shall bring Nothing. At Nicmok, as I have before said; Land is given for Nothing, and at Noraganzet it must be bought at twenty to twenty-five Pounds Sterling the hundred Acres, so that whoever brings Nothing here, finds Nothing. It is very true that Living is exceedingly cheap, and that with a little one can

make a good Settlement. A Family of three or four Persons can make with fifty Pistoles a fine Settlement; but it needs not less than that. Those who bring much, do well in Proportion.

TWENTY-SECOND and Twenty-third. To be answered.


TWENTY-FOURTH. One can come to this Country, and return the same as in Europe. There is the greatest Liberty, and you may live without any Constraint. Those who desire to come into this Country, should get themselves naturalized (*fridanniser*) in London in order to be free to carry on Business in any Sort of Merchandise, and to trade with the English Islands, without which they cannot do so.

TWENTY-FIFTH, Twenty-sixth,
Twenty-seventh. To be answered.
The Articles to which I fail to reply are
those of which I cannot give any Account,
because it is necessary to inform myself
exactly, and to see for myself. I have
told you above that the Money of London
gives a Profit of twenty-five per cent.
Although this Advantage is evident, it is
nevertheless better to bring Merchandise
upon which there is a Gain of one hun-
dred per cent. including the twenty-five
Exchange, for Merchandise is bought here
only by Barter, and if you give Money,
it is in no Respect to your Advantage.
On another Occasion, I will give the
Prices of Merchandise, and the Kinds
proper for this Country here, a Thing I
cannot do as yet, having only just arrived.
If I had arrived a Month or two earlier,

I should have been able to see the Crops of this Country. I have been here in Season to have seen a prodigious Quantity of Apples, from which they make a marvellously good Cider. One hundred and twenty Pots cost only eight Shillings, and at the Inn it is sold two Pence the Pot, two Pence the Pot for Beer. There is an inferior Quality which costs only five or six Shillings one hundred and twenty Pots. I am to take Rooms with one of my Friends, and have our Meals in common for the Winter, which, they all tell me, is here very rough and long, and the Summer extremely warm, a Thing I shall make Trial of, if God grants me the Favor of passing it, and giving an exact Account of all Things.

At Boston, the 15-25 of November,
1687.

II.

INCE my Arrival only two Vessels have left, by which I did myself the Honor to write you. My first Letter was dated the 15-25 November, '87, in which I replied to several Articles of your Memorandum, and in this I will try to reply to some others. My second Letter was of the 1st of December, in which you will have had the exact Narrative of my Journey made to Noraganzet, and the Number of Families who are there established. I have replied to the second Article of your Memorandum touching the Religions; but I forgot to tell you that there is here a Temple of Anabaptists, for as to the other Sects of which I spoke in my Report concerning Noraganzet, it is only for that Country

and not for Boston, for we have here no Religions other than the Anglican, the Presbyterian, the Anabaptists and our own. As for Papists, I have discovered since being here eight or ten, three of whom are French and come to our Church, and the others are Irish ; with the Exception of the Surgeon who has a Family, the others are here only in Passage.

THIRD. Of this third Article I have as yet no good Knowledge, although I have sought Information from those Persons who are in some Sort distinguished from the others, and who I have thought could enlighten me. However, they know Nothing, perhaps are designedly ignorant ; at all Events there is no Doubt that all is subject to the Orders of H. B. M. and that we Refugees are here in entire Security. We have here no Court except a

prefidial one which gives Judgement in civil and criminal Matters, composed of a Prefident and twelve Counsellors who have the same Laws and Customs they had heretofore. The only additional Point is, that the Governor is present in Council whenever he pleases, and it is he who holds the casting Vote. Within a short Time they have increased the Duties on Wine; such as ordinarily paid only ten Shillings the Pipe pays thirty at Present; and the Tavern Keepers who paid only fifty Shillings a Pipe for the Wine they sold, pay at Present one hundred and one hundred and twenty a Gallon [Pipe?] for Brandy, thirty Pence a Barrel for Cider, and thirty Pence a Barrel for Beer. As for other Merchandise, it pays as usual half per cent. Besides this prefidial [Court], there are eight Justices of the Peace who are for civil Cases that come up in the Town.

Not that they can wholly settle any Cause ; if the Parties like Litigation, they appeal to the presidial, or to the Council of twenty-four which is assembled only in Matters of the highest Importance.

FIFTH. I can reply to this Article only in Part, not having yet seen Fruit on the Trees ; but I know very well that for Fig, Orange, Lime, Olive, Pomegranate, Almond and Mulberry Trees, there are not any, the Country being too cold. Nevertheless I can assure you that I have passed Winters in Languedoc more severe than this one. We have had but very little Ice, and Snow twice, a Foot deep each Time. It is also true that some English People have told me that it has been fifty Years since they have seen a Winter so mild ; but what I admire in this Country is, that it never rains more than

three Days of the Month. Ever since I have arrived, I have remarked it; after which you have clear Days, a fine, fresh Air, on which Account one fees very little Sicknefs, and many People of good Appetite. The Land here is of varying Quality, as I have already told you. There is some that is sandy; all the Rest produces very well. They gather here Quantities of Indian Corn, which is worth at Present only sixteen Pence the Bushel; they gather also Wheat, Corn and Rye, but not in great Quantity and all these do very well, Vegetables also; as for the Vine it will do very well; it has only just been planted. There is a Packet arrived from Fayal which has brought some Cuttings. The French strive as far as they can to have it brought, some the Black, others the Yellowish, others the Red, the Sandy [Colored] excepted.

SEVENTH. The Ground is tilled with the Plough, and after the Ground is well prepared, a Hole is made in the Earth with a Peg, and four or five Grains of Indian Corn are put in. The Holes are equally Distant from each other. When the Corn is high, the Ground at the Foot is hilled as much as possible, in Order that the Wind may not cut it [down], when it comes to be laden with Ears. Other Grain is sown as in Europe.

EIGHTH. Land here is charged with no Tax, up to the present Time. I told you of the Manner it can be obtained, at Noraganzet. There are here divers French Families who have purchased English Residences all built, and which they have got exceedingly cheap. M. de

.

Bonrepos, Brother of our Minister, has bought one fifteen Miles from here, and at one League from a very pretty Town, and where there is a great Trade, which they call Sallem, for sixty-eight Pistoles, of ten Livres of France each. The House is very pretty, and it never was built for fifty Pistoles. There are seventeen Acres of Land all cleared, and a little Orchard. M. Legan, a French Merchant Goldsmith, has bought one twelve Miles from here toward the South, on the Seashore, where he has a very pretty House and ten Acres and a half of Land for eighty Pistoles, of ten Livres of France each. He has also his Share in the Commons, where he can send his Cattle to Pasture, and cut Wood for his Needs, and for selling here, it being conveniently sent by Sea. Similar Chances offer every Day, and Farms to be let on Shares as many as you will, and

at a moderate Price. M. Mouffet, one of our French People, finding himself burdened with a Family, is renting one which they gave him for eight Pistoles a Year; there is a good House, and twenty Acres of cleared Land. He can make fix to seven Barrels of Cider, and the Owner gives him the Profit of two Cows. If our poor Refugee Brethren who understand tilling Land, should come hither, they could not fail of living very comfortably and getting rich, for the English are very inefficient, and understand only their Indian Corn and Cattle.

Here in Boston there are not more than twenty French Families, and they are every Day diminishing, on Account of departing for the Country to buy or hire Land and to strive to make some Settlement. They are expected this Spring from all Quarters. Two young Men have

lately arrived from Carolina, who give some News of that Country; especially they say they never saw so miserable a Country, and so unhealthful a Climate. They have Fevers there during the whole Year, such as that those attacked rarely recover; that if there be some who escape their Effect, they become all leather-colored, as are these two who have arrived, who are Objects of Compassion. Moreover the Heats there are so severe, that it is almost impossible to endure them, and that they infected the Water, and consequently caused Sicknefs, there being no other Drink than that. They give the farther Intelligence that before their Departure a Vessel from London had arrived, in which were one hundred and thirty Persons, the Crew of the Vessel included, of whom one hundred and fifteen died as soon as they landed, all from the malignant

Fevers spreading among them. There are about eighty Persons who are coming from Carolina to make a Settlement here or at New York. M. Gaillard, whom my Father knows, has arrived with his whole Family in Carolina, and M. Bric de Montpelier. M. Delbos is in good Health, and was to set out by the first Opportunity for New York or here.

TWELFTH. To this Article touching the Savages I have made Answer in my Report of Noraganzet. [This is in the missing Part.]

THIRTEENTH. As for wild Beasts, we have here plenty of Bears, and Wolves in great Number who commit Ravages among the Sheep, if good Precautions are not taken. We also have here plenty of Rattlesnakes, but they

have not yet showed themselves. I have seen only some small Snakes of three Inches [around?] and long in Proportion; there are a great many, for they are to be seen seven or eight together. All these Animals flee from Man, and it doth not seem that they harm anybody.

FIFTEENTH. The English who inhabit these Countries are as elsewhere, good and bad; but one sees more of the Latter than the Former, and to state the Case to you in a few Words, there are here of all Kinds, and consequently of every Kind of Life and Manners; not that disputing and quarreling are common with them, but they do not lead good Lives. There are those who practise no Formality of Marriage except joining Hands, and so live in Common; others who are sixty Years of Age and are not yet

baptized, because they are not Members [of the Church]. It is about a Month since they baptized in our Church a Woman of forty-five and five of her Children. Her eldest might have been sixteen Years old; the Presbyterians would not baptize her because she had not become a Member [of the Church].

SIXTEENTH. There is Nothing to fear from the Savages, for they are few in Number. The last Wars they had with the English, twelve Years ago, have reduced them to a small Number, and consequently they are incapable of defending themselves.

SEVENTEENTH. Stone [*Raffière*] for building Purposes is found here, and Brick, as much as you Want. It costs sixteen Shillings a Thousand.

EIGHTEENTH. Salt is not manufactured in this Country; it is brought from the Island of Tortilla. This Year, several Vessels returned from the Islands empty, for Lack of Salt and Sugar, the Rains having laid Everything waste; and the Sea made an Entrance into the Salt-works, which dissolved the whole, so that Salt, which was worth only nine Shillings the Cask, is worth at Present fourteen; and as the Vessels are beginning to leave for the Fisheries, it may be still dearer.

TWENTIETH. With the Exception of Furs, every Kind of Merchandise is good [to bring] here and especially, Cloth, blue Stuffs, white Stuffs, printed Stuffs, or East India Goods, Cables and Ship-tackling, and Dutch Linen for Sails. On all these Goods one can reckon on

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eighty to a hundred per cent. [Profit], including the twenty-five per cent. Exchange on the Money ; all must be shipped at London and pay the half Duty, when the Goods are brought from elfewhere to London, for Everything must pass there before coming here.



